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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1		A method of multicasting, comprising:
2	Sendi	ng multicast information from a source to a plurality of targets;
3	sendi	ng respective acknowledgements from each of the targets, indicating
4		receipt of the multicast information;
5	mergi	ng the respective acknowledgements into a merged acknowledgement;
6		and
7	suppl	ying the merged acknowledgement to the source.
1	2.	The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the multicast information is
2	sent across a	switch to a plurality of targets.
1	3.	The method as recited in claim 2 wherein the respective
2	acknowledge	ments are sent from the respective targets to the switch.
1	4.	The method as recited in claim \(\beta \) wherein the switch merges the
2	respective ac	knowledgements and forwards the merged acknowledgement to the
3	source.	
1	5.	The method as recited in claim 4 wherein the acknowledgements are
2	supplied in a	n acknowledgement packet encoding an identity of the acknowledging
3	target.	
1	6.	The method as recited in claim 3 wherein the switch is a synchronous
2	switch and al	l acknowledgements are received by the switch at the same time.

8. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the merged acknowledgement is formed by logically combining the respective acknowledgements.

switch coupling a plurality of sources and a plurality of targets in a network.

The method as recited in claim 3 wherein the switch is a network

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information.

1	9. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the merged		
2	acknowledgement encodes the respective acknowledges to indicate to the source		
3	which targets successfully received the multicast information.		
1	10. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the merged		
2	acknowledgement indicates whether all of the targets successfully received the		
3	multicast information, the merged acknowledgement not identifying which of the		
4	targets successfully received or failed to successfully receive the multicast		

- 11. The method as recited in claim 10 wherein the merged acknowledgement includes a single bit indicating whether all of the targets successfully received the multicast information.
 - A networked system comprising: 12. a sending node;
 - a plurality of receiving nodes coupled to simultaneously receive multicast information sent from the sending node during a multicast operation and coupled to provide acknowledgements indicating whether the

multicast information was successfully received; and

- a switching medium coupled to supply the multicast information to the respective receiving nodes simultaneously and to receive and combine the respective acknowledgements into a combined acknowledgement supplied to the sending node.
- 13. The networked system as recited in claim 12 wherein the networked system includes a switched data network and the switching medium is a network switch.
- The networked system as recited in claim 12 wherein each 14. acknowledgement comprises a plurality of bits, each bit corresponding to a different node, one bit being set to indicate that a node corresponding to the one bit successfully received the multicast information.

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- 15. The networked system as recited in claim 14 wherein the combined acknowledgement includes a plurality of bits corresponding to multicast targets, each bit of the combined acknowledgement that is set corresponding to a node that successfully received the multicast information.
 - 16. The networked system as recited in claim 12 wherein each acknowledgement comprises a plurality of bits, each bit corresponding to one of a plurality of types of errors.
 - 17. The networked system as recited in claim 16 wherein corresponding bits from respective ones of the acknowledgements are combined in the combined acknowledgement, a bit being set to a first predetermined value in the combined acknowledgement to indicate that one or more of the targets had a particular one of the errors and the bit being set to a second value to indicate that none of the receiving nodes had the particular one of the errors.
 - 18. The networked system as recited in claim 12 wherein the acknowledgements from the plurality of target nodes are provided to the switching medium at a fixed time relative to the sending of the multicast information.
 - 19. The networked system as recited in claim 18 wherein the combined acknowledgement is provided to the source node at a fixed time relative to the sending of the multicast information.
 - 20. The networked system as recited in claim 12 wherein the networked system is pipelined.
- 21. The networked system as recited in claim 12 wherein the switching medium combines the acknowledgements in response to information in each acknowledgement packet that indicates a multicast acknowledge is being sent.
 - 22. The networked system as recited in claim 12 wherein the switching medium combines the acknowledgements into the combined acknowledgement if the

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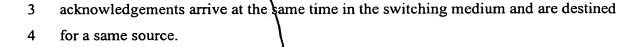
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- 23. The networked system as recited in claim 12 wherein the switching medium combines the acknowledgements in response to having scheduled a multicast data transfer.
- 24. The networked system as recited in claim 12 wherein the networked system is operable to reserve switch paths for forwarding the acknowledgements based on switch settings used for forwarding the multicast information.
- 25. The networked system as recited in claim 12 wherein the networked system includes a plurality of hosts, each of the hosts including both a sending node and a receiving node coupled to the switching medium.
- 26. An apparatus for transmitting information between an initiator node and a plurality of target nodes, comprising:
 - means for multicasting information to a plurality of the target nodes from the initiator node; and
 - means for combining received acknowledgements indicating whether the multicast information was successfully received, into a combined acknowledgement and returning the combined acknowledgement to the initiator node.

